

WYOMING OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION

2023 HUNTER OF THE YEAR: KURT PACKINGHAM

I AM HONORED TO RECEIVE THIS AWARD.

I grew up in East Central Iowa, rolling hills, fields of corn, and home of the whitetail deer. I started hunting pheasant, squirrel, rabbit and of course deer at a young age. Back in the day deer were scarce, so only buck licenses were available.

I went to college in the late 70's and majored in geology, even though I knew I would work at the family business. Geology came easy to me and let me explore the outdoors. With the geology major I was also able to spend six weeks out in Dubois at the geology camp. I instantly fell in love with the mountains. While my fellow classmates went to Jackson Hole for the weekends, I would spend my time exploring the Wind River Range, camping and fishing at Lower Ross Lake. Let me tell ya, it's not easy to get to Ross Lake but worth it.

I wanted to share my love for the mountains in Dubois, so I took my wife Courtney backpacking in the area to show her the beauty. I hired Larry Stetter to pack us into Ross Lake by horseback, my wife instantly fell in love the mountains too. The next year I hired Larry again to pack us in, this time he sent his son Dustin to do the work. This is where our friendship and hunting relationship with the Stetter family began, all from a little backpacking trip in the mountains.

After a few years of backpacking, I decided to share the beauty of Wyoming with my brother Trent, he also fell in love with the area. After that trip, we talked about Elk hunting and gave Dustin a call. Larry his dad had a guiding business and Dustin worked with his dad, Dustin helped us with getting a license, and that next fall Larry and Dustin took us on our Elk hunt.



My brother and I enjoyed big game hunting. I think we've hunted Wyoming fifteen different times, going every other year. Elk hunting became our favorite, if we couldn't hunt elk in Wyoming then we would try other areas to hunt, British Columbia, Montana, Idaho, Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and on these hunts we were able to hunt for Mule Deer, Antelope, Reindeer, Brown Bear, Moose and Wolves.

This brings us back to Dustin, he has guided our hunts for the many years. Our trips take us deep in the mountains to Double Cabins where we camped in tents by the creek and

ate dinner over the fire. With all the elk in the area, the big guy made sure he wasn't in my crosshairs. A few years later on our hunting trip in Wy, my brother got 6x6 elk in the morning, the next day was my turn to shoot. Dustin took me to the "morning spot" and he walked further down the backside of the mountain, we called for a couple hours. With no luck, we decided to pack up and try again the next day. Just as we started back we heard a bugle and not far away. Dustin set me up next to a big tree and he went behind me and called some more, since he was behind and higher than me, he saw the big guy first. Dustin whispered to me not to look at the antlers, concentrate on hitting the sweet spot on the elk.

So of course I looked at the antlers and I started shaking, they were huge, I shot and missed. The second shot though stopped him in his tracks. It was about 3 am by time we were able to get the elk out and back to our camp. He measured 340-6/8 inches.

Thank you Dustin for nominating me and to WYOGA board of directors for supporting his nomination. Kurt Packingham 🙏

